

The Maui News

Maui's Newspaper Since 1900

THURSDAY, May 15, 2008

50 CENTS

Property tax rates set

Council votes to maintain current levels; stage set for budget

WAILUKU — The Maui County Council set property tax rates for the 2009 fiscal year in a special hearing Wednesday, voting 5-0 for a resolution that will keep property tax rates at current levels in the coming fiscal year.

The action sets the estimated revenue base for the 2008-09 county budget, which runs from July 1 through June 30, 2009.

In a series of three hearings Wednesday, the council heard testimony on the property tax rates and

on fuel taxes, for which there were no proposed changes.

Fuel tax rates, along with the motor vehicle weight tax and other county taxes and fees, will be taken up at the council's first reading of the fiscal 2009 budget at 9 a.m. Friday.

Property tax rates as approved Wednesday will be as follows:

- Homeowner: \$2 per \$1,000 of assessed value.
- Improved residential: \$4.85.
- Apartment: \$4.55.
- Commercial: \$6.25.
- Industrial: \$6.50.
- Agricultural: \$4.50.
- Conservation: \$4.75.

- Unimproved residential: \$5.35.
- Hotel: \$8.20.
- Time share: \$14.

Bill Tavares of the Committee on More Equitable Taxation said his group "happily agrees" with the decision to keep tax rates at current levels. But he urged council members to do away with an "outdated, costly, punitive, unfair tax system," in which assessments are based on the market value of a property.

Tavares' group has repeatedly advocated for tax assessments to be based on the original selling price of a home and he vowed to continue to pursue that goal.

If nothing is changed within his

lifetime, he said, "I shall return as the phantom of this council."

During a brief hearing on the fuel taxes, council members heard from Paul Lau'b, who urged them to do away with the county fuel tax, and to urge the state and federal government to stop taxing gasoline.

He said people were being hurt by a "war" with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

"They are bleeding us slowly rather than cutting us off in one fell swoop," he said.

Council Members Danny Mateo, Michelle Anderson, Gladys Baisa and Jo Anne Johnson were excused from Wednesday's meeting.